

Case Number:	CM15-0137898		
Date Assigned:	07/27/2015	Date of Injury:	06/03/1996
Decision Date:	09/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/09/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/16/2015

HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to an expert reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. He/she has been in active clinical practice for more than five years and is currently working at least 24 hours a week in active practice. The expert reviewer was selected based on his/her clinical experience, education, background, and expertise in the same or similar specialties that evaluate and/or treat the medical condition and disputed items/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:
 State(s) of Licensure: California, District of Columbia, Maryland
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Anesthesiology, Pain Management

CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

The injured worker is a 53 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 6/3/1996. The mechanism of injury was lifting a large block of ice. The injured worker was diagnosed as having opioid dependence, chronic low back pain and post laminectomy syndrome. There is no record of a recent diagnostic study. Treatment to date has included spinal cord stimulator, nerve blocks, aqua therapy and medication management. In progress notes dated 7/14/2015 and 7/16/2015, the injured worker complains of low back pain radiating to the bilateral lower extremities, rated 9/10 without medications. Physical examination showed restricted range of motion with no tenderness. The treating physician is requesting Methadone 5 mg.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

The Final Determination was based on decisions for the disputed items/services set forth below:

Methadone 5mg daily: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Methadone.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Opioids Page(s): 61, 78.

Decision rationale: With regard to methadone, the MTUS CPMTG states: "Recommended as a second-line drug for moderate to severe pain if the potential benefit outweighs the risk. The FDA reports that they have received reports of severe morbidity and mortality with this medication. This appears, in part, secondary to the long half-life of the drug (8-59 hours). Pain relief on the other hand only lasts from 4-8 hours. Methadone should only be prescribed by providers experienced in using it." Per MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines p78 regarding on-going management of opioids "Four domains have been proposed as most relevant for ongoing monitoring of chronic pain patients on opioids: Pain relief, side effects, physical and psychosocial functioning, and the occurrence of any potentially aberrant (or non-adherent) drug related behaviors. These domains have been summarized as the '4 A's' (Analgesia, activities of daily living, adverse side effects, and any aberrant drug-taking behaviors). The monitoring of these outcomes over time should affect therapeutic decisions and provide a framework for documentation of the clinical use of these controlled drugs." Review of the available medical records reveals no documentation to support the medical necessity of methadone nor any documentation addressing the '4 A's' domains, which is a recommended practice for the on-going management of opioids. Specifically, the notes do not appropriately review and document pain relief, functional status improvement, appropriate medication use, or side effects. The MTUS considers this list of criteria for initiation and continuation of opioids in the context of efficacy required to substantiate medical necessity, and they do not appear to have been addressed by the treating physician in the documentation available for review. Furthermore, efforts to rule out aberrant behavior (e.g. CURES report, UDS, opiate agreement) are necessary to assure safe usage and establish medical necessity. The most recent UDS filed for review was dated 7/2011. It was noted that a signed opiate agreement was in the chart and CURES was monitored. As MTUS recommends discontinuing opioids if there is no overall improvement in function, the request is not medically necessary.